

War or Peace?

Choosing the right divorce lawyer



CAROLINE MCNALLY, Executive Partner at law firm Gall, answers some key questions about divorce in Hong Kong, including what to consider when looking for a lawyer, and how to move forward with dignity.



How common is divorce in Hong Kong, particularly among expat couples?

Sadly, it's very common in Hong Kong among both the local and expat communities. Hong Kong has earned the reputation as being a "graveyard for marriages" as there are a high number of expats who relocate here only to find that the lifestyle and culture aren't necessarily conducive to a happy family life.

At what stage should I consider hiring a lawyer?

I suggest having an initial consultation at an early stage. A family lawyer can give you information about the legal landscape, which can help to alleviate concerns and frame constructive discussions. They'll also be able to make referrals to other professionals who may be able to help save the marriage. If there are children, it's important to be well informed about the impact that separation or divorce will have on them. Early intervention could be the key to addressing the problems in a relationship and avoiding conflict if separation or divorce becomes inevitable.

What are some important things to consider when choosing a lawyer?

Aside from the necessary legal expertise, you should choose a family lawyer with whom you have a good rapport. The lawyer/client relationship involves teamwork with mutual understanding and respect. Consider whether your lawyer will take a practical approach to resolving the issues that arise on divorce, will provide sensible and cost-effective solutions, and is committed to minimising acrimony.

What's the best way to make initial contact?

I suggest sending an email to the prospective lawyer and include the name of your partner or spouse to enable the lawyer to clear conflicts. Your email should include a brief outline of the assistance you're seeking.

What can I expect from this first discussion/consultation?

The first consultation is an opportunity for you to explain your situation, including your objectives and priorities. The lawyer can provide you with detailed information and advice and raise any matters you may not have considered. Family law is a discretionary area of the law and everyone's situation will be different. There is no "one size fits all" solution. The lawyer will work with you to find the best outcome for your situation.

When and how should I bring up the subject of fees?

The issue of fees should be raised before the initial consultation so that there is transparency from the outset.

What are some good qualities of a helpful divorce lawyer?

A helpful divorce lawyer will provide a range of options and ensure that you understand the advantages and disadvantages of each one. They'll listen to your concerns and help you navigate the breakdown of your marriage with sensitivity and kindness with the short-, medium- and long-term objectives firmly in focus.

What kind of expertise does Gall have in this area?

We're specialists in all areas of family law. The family and divorce team at Gall consists of two partners and three associates who are passionate about achieving the best outcome for the client without losing sight of the future family dynamics when there are children involved. We help clients understand the reality of their situation and guide them through one of the most difficult times of their life. Divorce is painful, but it doesn't need to be a declaration of war. We help clients move forward with dignity with a clear understanding of their options. *e*

Find out more at gallhk.com or call 3405 7688.